

carry a pain that may never fade. May they find peace in knowing their loved ones endure, not only in medals and memories, but in the hearts of all Americans, who are forever grateful for their service, valor, and sacrifice.

It is so important that we never forget the sacrifice of those who served in Vietnam or the sacrifice of those who serve today, and that is why I consider it such a privilege to tell the stories of those who did not make it home and listen to the stories of those who did.

I want to share with you a song that was sung at the recent Vietnam Memorial Exhibit at the Fargo Air Museum in May. I was really moved by a local poet and local performing artist, Shaun Schipper, who was able to sing this song to honor those who served, and I would like to read the lyrics of his song, which is called "Nineteen Years Old." I am not going to sing it, and all of you should be very excited that I am not singing it. I couldn't do justice to the words he wrote.

He wrote:

nineteen years old six months from prom
out in a jungle in Vietnam
so scared don't wanna die
thinking bout home, tears in my eyes
what are we fighting for, I'm so sick of war
I bet the guys on the other side
wanna go home like I do
miss your mom and dad, the life I had
I pray to God I'll get back home again
to be with you
search and destroy, kill or be killed
mayhem out here in the battlefield
adrenaline flowing another sleepless night
holding my M16, ready for a fight
here in the trenches fear everywhere
death and destruction smoke in the air
mortars grenades deafening sounds
shrapnel and bullets flying all around
praying to God calling for mom's
another buddy dies in Vietnam
another buddy dies in Vietnam
and it goes on and on and on and on
what are we fighting for, I am so sick of war
I bet the guys on the other side
Wanna go home like I do

I want to thank him, and I know he was greatly moved by and inspired to write this song by encountering a Vietnam vet. I think all of us who have had those experiences meeting veterans and people who serve can't help but be moved by the quality of their continued devotion to their brothers-in-arms but also the quality of their service.

CONNECT WITH VETERANS ACT

So I was moved to doing something for veterans, making sure that our veterans have an opportunity when they return home to basically reconnect with their families. So while each week I come to the Senate floor to honor the persons who gave their lives in the Vietnam war, to truly honor them and our current servicemembers and veterans, we have to make real changes to better support them.

Today I am proud to reintroduce a bipartisan bill with Senators MORAN, KING, and BOOZMAN that would better connect our Nation's new veterans with the services, resources, and benefits that are available right at home in their communities. My Connect With

Veterans Act, S. 1797, aims to help servicemembers transitioning to civilian life after they separate from the military and begin to settle into their communities.

Organizations, such as the Association of Defense Communities, have stated that the most important part of the transition from servicemember to civilian comes in the short period of time after that servicemember leaves the military. We need to make sure it is effective and successful, and there is more we could do to accomplish that goal.

Too often, these veterans do not have access to the basic information on local services, and many communities have few ways to connect with them. I have traveled across North Dakota and listened to our veterans. I hear time and time again about the need for veterans to have more information on services and opportunities available to them at the local level.

My Connect With Veterans Act would provide these veterans with better access to that information by making it easier for cities, counties, and tribes to interact directly with them. It is a simple but commonsense bill. Participation, No. 1, is completely voluntary. Transitioning servicemembers will be given the option to share their contact information with communities in which they intend to live after completing military service.

Interested cities, counties, and tribes will be able to request that contact information from a secure directory maintained by the Department of Veterans Affairs so they can provide the information. Integrating back into civilian life may be particularly difficult for those living in rural communities, like so many of the communities in my home State of North Dakota, as they often have fewer resources and access to less services.

As a study from 2014 shows, half of the veterans polled from the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan said they are having difficulty adjusting to civilian life. This reasonable solution would help change that by allowing local communities to connect with new veterans at the earliest possible point in the transition process. With 550 servicemembers transitioning daily—I want to repeat that—550 servicemembers transitioning daily nationwide out of the military and with nearly 250,000 service men and women expected to leave military service over the next 5 years, we have to prepare.

We have to say thank you by making sure they get the services they have earned and that we can connect them with communities where they can continue to participate and serve their country and their communities. I know from talking to North Dakotans that this bill will especially benefit communities in my State that have unmet employment needs.

As you can imagine, over 20,000 jobs go unfilled, and we have all of these trained servicemembers who are com-

ing out of the military who would be just excellent additions to our North Dakota community. So whether it is employment or health care or family support services, we have to do better. I appreciate the opportunity to talk about this. We have to have a plan for our servicemembers. I think connecting them with their community is a great plan.

EXPORT-IMPORT BANK

Ms. HEITKAMP. Finally, Mr. President, I would just like to give a little update on what has been happening since we have basically allowed the charter of the Ex-Im Bank to expire. Just as we predicted, that unilateral disarmament in our trade financing opportunities would open the door for opportunities in other countries. We are seeing more and more this delay in basically having a fully functioning Ex-Im Bank is already costing jobs and opportunities in our State.

So I want to reinforce that, not by just my words but talk about what is being said about the U.S. Export-Import Bank being shut down as what is good for China and bad for our competitiveness. Today, the Business Standard printed an interview with the head of the Export-Import Bank of India, who said that with U.S. Ex-Im Bank closing down, we would now have more markets because Indian products are going to compete with U.S. products, and now that competition will go away.

In a recent Reuters article, the chief risk analyst of the China Export-Import Bank said that the end of the American Export-Import Bank would help China be more competitive. He said, "With respect to competition in strategy and policies between the U.S. and China, this is a good thing" for China.

Another recent article said China's central bank is injecting \$32 billion into the China Development Bank and \$30 billion into the Export-Import Bank of China. We are seeing very similar growth in the Export-Import Bank of India.

So I would suggest, if we truly want to remain a global competitor, if we truly want to access an international market where we have—in fact, 95 percent of all consumers live outside our country. If we don't have access to those markets and if we are not competing on a level playing field, it is going to cost American business, including American small business, opportunities—opportunities for exports, opportunities for profitability. But equally important, it is going to cost American jobs. So sooner rather than later we expect we will have a vote on reauthorizing the Ex-Im Bank.

I know we continue to see challenges to having that vote. We continue to see challenges to this institution. But I will tell you that many small businesses in my State are contacting us, wondering why in the world we would

do this. Why in the world would we shut down the Ex-Im Bank that is a critical part of that trade infrastructure? So why in the world, indeed. Why would we ever make this decision? It is a decision that needs to be reversed. We need to get the Ex-Im Bank fully functioning and back in business.

So we are going to be doing everything we can in this next month and into future months, if we expect that we are going to eliminate the possibility of unilateral disarmament in trade financing.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SULLIVAN). Without objection, it is so ordered.

TRAGEDY IN CHATTANOOGA

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, this is a sad day in Chattanooga and a sad day across our country—another terrible tragedy—a mass shooting, apparently. A thorough investigation is underway.

The Senate's thoughts are with the families of the marines and our entire military community. Our thanks, as usual in these situations, goes out to the first responders and the community that mobilized so quickly.

We have two great Senators from Tennessee, who I know are mourning the events of today, and the American people will be interested in knowing as soon as possible as many facts about this horrible shooting as possible.

TRIBUTE TO PIKEVILLE INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I rise to recognize and congratulate the Pikeville Independent Schools system in Pikeville, KY, on the occasion of its 100th anniversary. Under the leadership of Superintendent Jerry Green, it is one of the best public school systems in the Commonwealth.

Before the founding of Pikeville Independent Schools, in the early 20th century, the region contained only a scattering of small, one-room schoolhouses. In 1915, the first public high school in Pike County opened under the system's first superintendent, Tobias J. Kendrick. There were approximately 150 students and 9 teachers and administrators. Courses taught included geometry, advanced algebra, physics, German, rhetoric, and 4 years of Latin. The first senior class contained only one graduate, a man named Vernon Stump.

Today, Pikeville Independent Schools includes Pikeville Elementary and Pikeville Junior High/High School. The district boasts some 1,280 students

from preschool to the 12th grade, and all go by the nickname "Pikeville Panthers." Both Pikeville Elementary and Pikeville High are accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, and the school district has been chosen as one of only 17 Kentucky school districts to receive the What Parents Want Award.

Pikeville Independent Schools is constantly evaluating and creating programs to serve the needs of the students in the district. Pikeville Elementary, which serves preschool through grade 6, features full-time humanities teachers for art, music, and band. It has transition programs for both new students entering preschool and exiting students graduating into the seventh grade. It has many volunteer programs, and Pikeville Elementary volunteers log an average of 3,000 volunteer hours per year. It features a fully equipped science lab, an active and supportive parent-teacher organization, small class sizes, and individual instruction and tutoring.

Pikeville High School, which serves grades 7 through 12, offers its students 8 honors courses and 10 advanced placement courses, as well as unlimited opportunities for students to earn dual credit at the University of Pikeville. Currently, 45 percent of Pikeville High juniors and seniors are taking one or more dual credit courses through the university.

Pikeville High offers five vocational school programs and four career majors—business management, business technology, web development and administration, and information support services. A wide variety of extra-curricular activities are available, including Key Club, Pep Club, Future Business Leaders of America, and the National Honor Society, just to name a few.

Pikeville Independent Schools ranks second in the State for college and career readiness. The district's juniors place sixth in the State on the ACT test composite score. And the high school placed in the 97th percentile this past year among all schools in the State. The district's graduation rate for the 2012–2013 school year was over 96 percent. Athletics and artistic achievement are also highly valued in the district, and Pikeville Independent Schools have a long tradition of outstanding music groups, basketball, and football teams.

For 100 years, Pikeville Independent Schools has excelled at its mission to prepare students to become productive, contributing, valuable members of society who have pride in their school and their community. Kentucky is proud of the Pikeville Independent Schools system, and I congratulate the many men and women who work there for their service. I wish them the very best as they embark on a new century of representing the very best of Kentucky public education.

STORMS IN QUINCY, ILLINOIS

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I have represented Quincy, IL, and Adams County since coming to Congress in 1983 as a Member of the House of Representatives. I have found that there is something special about the Gem City—its people, its strong sense of community, and the fighting spirit to tackle any crisis from floods to storms.

That spirit was tested this week.

I am relieved and thankful that there were no serious injuries or fatalities after a major storm tore through Quincy on Monday night. Torrential rain and winds up to 74 miles per hour felled trees, broke dozens of utility poles, and tore roofs off several homes and businesses during the event. The Quincy mayor declared a citywide state of emergency Monday evening and Adams County followed with a state of disaster declaration. Several people say the battered city looked like a warzone.

More than 21,000 people were without power on Monday night and Tuesday. Crews have worked around the clock to restore electricity to most. Due to the loss of power, many stoplights were out throughout the city. Between the outages, flooded streets, and streets made impassable by fallen trees, navigating Quincy has been a challenge.

The Quincy Park District estimates that the "jaw dropping" damage to the city's 29 parks—especially Madison and South Parks—far exceeds the devastation from severe storms in 2011 that costs the District more than \$400,000. Caretakers at Woodland Cemetery discovered after the worst of the storm had passed that a 20-foot piece of a Civil War monument was toppled by the high winds and at least 35 trees were uprooted in the cemetery, many of which were more than a century old.

Dozens of Quincy residents checked into motels to escape the heat as they started the cleanup of their homes and properties without power. John Wood Community College and the Quincy Senior and Family Resources Center set up cooling centers to give people a place to take a break. The Red Cross, Salvation Army, and other local agencies have been on site to lend a helping hand.

I am grateful that Quincy fire chief Joe Henning, Adams County emergency management agency director John Simon, Quincy police chief Rob Copley, and many other elected officials and community leaders are leading cleanup and recovery efforts. Getting the city back on its feet and helping the people whose homes and businesses were damaged is a big job.

In today's Quincy Herald-Whig columnist Steve Eighinger said it best, "It's going to be quite a while before things are back to what we consider normal, but we'll get there. We're Quincy. We pay it forward."

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the column be printed in the RECORD.